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Alexander J. Motyl
Mark von Hagen

STATE FORMATION IN
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State Formation in Twentieth-Century Ukraine in Comparative Perspective

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THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE • Columbia University In the City of New York
420 West 118 Street • 12th Floor • New York, New York 10027

WILL UKRAINE SURVIVE 1994?

Alexander J. Motyl

Will Ukraine survive 1994? Increasingly, the answer one encounters is "no." Political deadlock, economic crisis, and ethnic rumblings in the Donbas and Crimea have transformed the post-independence euphoria of late 1991 into the gloom of late 1993. Worst-case scenarios—collapse, secession, decay—have replaced best-case scenarios—integration into Europe, economic prosperity, political dynamism.

Both views are wrong. Just as there was little cause for the exaggerated optimism of two years ago, so, too, there is just as little cause for the exaggerated pessimism of today. Ukraine's rapid and effortless transformation into a functioning market democracy was never in the cards; its consignment to the ash heap of history is just as unlikely.

Legacies of the Past

Like all the other non-Russian successor states, independent Ukraine emerged from the wreckage of a totalitarian empire, the USSR. The collapse of totalitarianism left an institutional vacuum within the society and the economy, while the collapse of empire left an institutional vacuum within the polity. In a word, Ukraine lacked a civil society, a market, and a state, and without these it could hardly have a coherent sense of national identity, democracy, and rule of law. It did possess a highly educated citizenry and numerous informal organizations, extensive blackmarketeering and organized crime, and administrators, former dissidents, and would-be elites. None of these translated into *institutions*—established behavioral procedures and rules of the game.

The task before Ukraine was immense: the construction of all the characteristics of a "normal" country. Some reflection would have suggested that attaining all these goals quickly and simultaneously in a country devastated by seventy years of

totalitarianism and several hundred years of imperialism was impossible. A Great Leap Forward of such magnitude would have dwarfed even Mao Zedong's utopian attempt to overcome structural constraints by a massive exertion of will.

In particular, the obstreperous nature of Ukraine's postimperial and posttotalitarian legacies meant that the rapid and full-scale introduction of the market—when defined as a set of economic institutions—was equally impossible. Markets presuppose effective, rule of law states: so extensive a set of economic exchanges necessitates a polity capable of monitoring transactions and the associated costs. Without rule of law, marketization becomes tantamount to the kind of gangster capitalism that has taken root in Russia. Big Bang approaches are a guarantee of the nonattainment of the market and, perhaps, of the discreditation of reform in general.

Post-Soviet states have no alternative to going slow, muddling through, decaying, and hoping for the best. This is not to say that reforms should not be pursued; obviously, they should. But it is to say that, while breakthroughs for the better cannot occur, breakdowns—or breakthroughs toward the much worse—can. Post-Soviet states such as Ukraine thus have one overriding goal—to avoid pursuing rash policies that could lead to their destabilization—and one secondary goal—to pursue measured reform within the parameters of the possible and not the desirable. Utopianism is the fastest way to disaster under post-Soviet conditions.

External Challenges

Seen from this viewpoint, Ukraine's current predicament—and it is a predicament—is not as serious or as hopeless as it seems. Although Ukraine is a mess, so, too, is every other post-Soviet state, and although Ukraine's "messiness" is likely to increase before it decreases, so, too, is that of its neighbors in

the former USSR. All of the successor states are in trouble, and all of them will remain in trouble. Hence, all of them are more or less equally liable to survive or to collapse. While it is possible to imagine fifteen adjacent states collapsing and disappearing at more or less the same time, such a scenario—under peacetime conditions at least—is surely implausible.

Although the possibility of war is not as far-fetched as one would like it to be, it would not work to Ukraine's disadvantage. Indeed, the emergence of a genuinely hostile Russia would translate into Ukraine's rapid integration into European economic and security structures and its concomitant transformation into a client state of the United States. As an East European version of a South Korea, Ukraine would become the recipient of large-scale Western—in particular, American—military and economic assistance that would guarantee its stability, if not its prosperity.

Naturally, such a scenario is premised on Russia's own transformation into a predator state. The conventional wisdom notwithstanding, that development seems plausible in view of Russia's bigness, its political traditions, its postimperial baggage (pieds-noirs and soldiers stationed in the republics), and the evident commitment of its policy makers to pursue "enlightened imperialism," spheres of influence, and Monroe Doctrines in the near abroad. The last point is especially significant as neo-imperialism and great power nostalgia are mainstream views in Russian politics; in this regard the manic imperialism of Vladimir Zhirinovsky differs from them in terms more of style than of substance. The burden of proof is on those who believe—hoping against hope?—that the pacific statements of individual policy makers such as Boris Yeltsin will suffice to overcome the force of history, institutions, culture, and interests.

Russia's aggressiveness, therefore, could be Ukraine's salvation. The United States and Western Europe would be more than willing to turn a blind eye to Russia's intervention in—perhaps even annexation of—Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Estonia. But even Western policy makers would draw the line at Ukraine. With or without nuclear weapons, Ukraine is too important geopolitically for its absorption by Russia to be tolerated.

Despite Foreign Minister Kozyrev's recent displays of chest-pounding, one would still like to think that Russian policy makers recognize the validity of this view. They *should*, as Russia's "objective" geopolitical interest is not to absorb Ukraine,

but to keep it cowed and uncertain, thereby transforming it into a reluctant vassal. Posttotalitarian Russia could defeat posttotalitarian Ukraine in a military encounter, but it would be hardpressed to control such an unruly province. A pliant Ukraine might be the preferred option of Russia—and of the West—but pliancy, while hardly a desirable condition, does presuppose existence, and it is the continued existence of Ukrainian statehood that is at issue here.

Kiev's exaggerated worries notwithstanding, it is hard to imagine Russia's attacking Ukraine by means of, say, a massive tank assault. Russia's own economy could hardly sustain such an adventure; its army, while still dangerous, is barely capable of disciplining its own recruits; its elites are scarcely able to maintain order in Moscow. Hegemony may still be possible, and troublemaking, muscleflexing, and instability seem inevitable, but there is no way for a crippled giant on the brink of economic and political collapse physically to occupy its neighbors, especially its large neighbors. Russia's imperial days are over. The empire, it bears repeating, is quite dead.

Internal Challenges

The continued existence of Ukraine also depends on a host of domestic factors. Here, too, the diagnosis is mixed—and that in itself is an enormous advance over the conventional wisdom, which sees only Ukraine's troubles. Ukraine, as I argue below, has experienced both successes and failures with respect to building a state, a nation, a civil society, a democracy, and a market. The picture is *not* one of unmitigated disaster.

What little there was of a Weberian state in Ukraine in late 1991 has, since then, been supplemented with elements of stateness that bode relatively well for the future. In contrast to Russia, the Ukrainian Presidency and Parliament are becoming institutions, and not mere arenas of (armed) struggle. Some ministries, especially those concerned with foreign affairs, are becoming competent. Some elites, especially those with extended training in Western educational institutions or in several newly established Ukrainian institutes, are acquiring badly needed expertise in administration and policy making. And even the most ignorant administrators are presumably learning something about running a state. The army appears to be a more or less coherent fighting force more or less dedicated to defending Ukraine. Last but not least, the sym-

bolic accoutrements of statehood—international recognition, hymns, flags—appear to have become natural and normal.

Similar gains can be claimed on the nation-building front. Although Russian doubts about the wisdom of Ukrainian independence may have grown, secessionist movements are nascent at best, and ethnic Russian identification with Ukraine as a homeland still appears to be strong. By the same token, an exclusivist Ukrainian nationalism is still confined to some marginal political groups and to parts of Western Ukraine. Although it is much too premature to claim that a coherent Ukrainian nation has come into being, a *narod Ukrainy* may already exist, especially if the willingness to communicate in both Russian and Ukrainian, the absence of ethnic tensions, and the continued non-politicization of ethnicity indicate the existence of such an entity.

Purveyors of Ukrainian collapse frequently suggest that, lured by the promise of economic prosperity in Russia, the ethnic Russians of the Donbas are likely to press for secession from Ukraine. Aside from the fact that secessionist movements the world over have been and still are notoriously unsuccessful, Donbas Russians would have to be completely irrational to embark on such a move. Their support of Ukrainian independence in late 1991 reflected the belief that life would be better in an independent Ukraine; in other words, their commitment to "Russianness" and Mother Russia as an ethnic homeland appears to be minimal. If so, then, for them, life in Ukraine will continue to be infinitely better than life in Russia. In energy-poor Ukraine, they have economic, political, and ethnic clout; in energy-rich Russia, they would be sacrificed to the interests of the more efficient Kuzbass, reduced to but one region in an enormous country, and have no ethnic card to play.

The Crimea is somewhat different, less because it would make more political, economic, or ethnic sense for its inhabitants to join Russia—consider that even in Yeltsin's Russia the Crimea would lose its putative sovereignty and enjoy far less genuine autonomy—and more because of the presence of the Black Sea Fleet. The Crimea's transformation into a Trans-Dniester republic is not implausible, but, civil war aside, its successful secession would still depend far more on Russia's willingness to absorb it—and thereby set a precedent for its own dismemberment—than on Ukraine's incapacity to prevent it. And in either case Ukraine as a state would survive.

Civil society may be doing best in independent Ukraine. Although it, too, is still in a nascent stage, the large and burgeoning number of autonomous nonstate organizations, groupings, and protoinstitutions is encouraging evidence of a civil society-in-becoming. The revival of churches, the multiplication of self-styled political parties, the emergence of numerous social, cultural, and ethnic organizations all portend the development of a public sphere that could act as a barrier between the citizenry and the state and as a breeding ground for further private political, social, and economic initiatives.

Democratization receives passing grades as well, especially when compared to the retrograde processes taking place in Russia, where the struggle between parliament and president has led to deinstitutionalization, the legitimization of violence as a means of political struggle, and the emergence of an all-powerful president with indisputably dictatorial inclinations. Democracy, after all, is about procedures, rules, and institutions—and not about democratic proclamations and intentions. Although the Ukrainian government has been deadlocked for most of 1992 and 1993—and that *has* impeded reform—deadlock does have one important redemptive feature: it is also a sign of growing institutionalization and of the recognition by political elites that balance of power is central to democratic politics. No less important is the ability by the Ukrainian parliament and president to agree peacefully on general elections in the first half of 1994. A new parliament and president may be just as deadlocked and economic reform may not move forward, but democracy, which also matters, will have been advanced.

Economic reform is the Achilles' heel of Ukraine. The karbovanets has collapsed, hyperinflation is ravaging the land, privatization, even of the service sector, is less than minimal, and a partial and perhaps temporary return to central planning has been decreed in late 1993. None of this is good news, of course, but it is catastrophic only if one assumes—in the spirit of vulgar Marxism and vulgar Marketeerism—that economics determines everything and that nothing else matters. I have no doubt that economics is important, but I have just as little doubt that states and nations and civil societies and democracies also matter, especially in posttotalitarian, postimperial circumstances.

But let us assume the worst—that the economic downturn continues unabated. What, then, lies in store for Ukraine as a state? Obviously, its ability to function as an effective and modern polity will be

impaired, but will it also collapse? The answer has to be "no." A parasitical bureaucracy might emerge, the military might seize power, class and ethnic tensions might accumulate, civil war might even become a reality—but, as Lebanon, Guatemala, Spain, and many other countries that experienced civil war suggest, Ukraine is likely to remain. It may become impoverished and devastated, but it will not just disappear.

Skeptics might argue that the experience of the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia suggests otherwise: some states do just disappear. Might Ukraine be next? Like them, it is in the throes of crisis; like them, it is, or was, socialist; like them, it is multinational. But these comparisons conceal the truly important differences: namely, unlike them, Ukraine lacks a federal structure inspired by Stalin's views on the nationality question and that, unlike them, it is already developing nascent political, social, national, and cultural institutions that might help it weather the current storm. If these differences make a difference, then Russia's fate as a coherent state may be rather more in doubt than Ukraine's: its political institutions are in complete disarray, while its federal structure bodes no end of trouble for the center in Moscow.

One final point. Such catastrophic scenarios are premised on a view of Ukrainian elites as being so irrational as to be incapable of adopting reform even when their own survival is on the line. Surely such an assumption is exaggerated. Ukrainian elites may be incompetent, but they are not so blind as to be congenitally incapable of understanding that, at some point, there really may be no alternative to a more stringent monetary policy.

Prospects for the Future

A comparison with the state-building efforts of 1917-1921 is appropriate. Then, a handful of intellectuals tried to take control of a state apparatus,

slap together an army, arouse a largely indifferent peasantry, survive a hostile international environment, fight back a determined ideological foe, and find a place in a chaotic postimperial Europe. As bad as things are at present, they are immeasurably better than they were then. Ukraine's numerous elites may have little experience running states, but they have had seventy years' experience of administering things. Ukraine has inherited a substantial chunk of the Soviet army and its equipment. Ukraine's leaders can draw on substantial segments of an urban, educated, and skilled population for support. Ukraine has been recognized by all the major powers, including Russia, and it holds seats in most of the major international organizations. Russia's policy makers may adopt enlightened imperialist policies, but even the most hard-core Russian imperialists lack the elan of the Bolsheviks. Most important perhaps, while the presence or absence of Ukraine did not matter to post-World War I Europe, which was busy redefining itself on the ruins of the Hohenzolern, Habsburg, and Romanov empires, it does matter to the stability and security of contemporary Europe. The end of Ukraine means the reassertion of a great power Russia and, as I intimated above, the beginning of a new Cold War.

Ukraine, then, will survive 1994—and 1995 and 1996 and many years thereafter. It may not be a place where most Western Europeans or North Americans might want to live, but it is unlikely to fare much better or much worse than most of the Soviet successor states. For a country emerging from the devastation of imperial and totalitarian rule, that is no mean feat.

*Alexander J. Motyl is Associate Director of The Harriman Institute. His most recent book, **Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine After Totalitarianism**, was published by the Council on Foreign Relations (1993).*

The Dilemmas of Ukrainian Independence and Statehood, 1917-21

Mark von Hagen

The brief experience of contemporary post-Soviet Ukraine has generated much speculation about the viability of this new member of the international community. As Ukraine and many other East Central European states celebrate the 75th anniversaries of their first efforts at statehood after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires in 1918, political commentators look for the "lessons" of history, while historians have begun to reexamine that turbulent period. This paper attempts to identify contextual factors that help explain the failure of the Ukrainian statehood project during the Revolution and Civil War, by comparing the situation of Ukraine with other contemporary incipient states, such as the Transcaucasian ones, and those states that succeeded to political independence, including Poland, the Baltics, other East Central European states, the Soviet Russian state, and finally, with the failed White anti-Bolshevik incipient states.

In the case of the Russian empire specifically, beginning in 1917 several common features developed in the periphery (for purposes of brevity, I shall summarize here developments in Ukraine, Transcaucasia, and Siberia): national and regional movements declared initial loyalty to the Provisional Government and made demands for limited national or regional autonomy; with the return of exiled political leaders, soldiers from the front, and peasants to the countryside, all regions experienced an increasing radicalization of social and national demands on the center, provoking a rapid turn to secession and independence; everywhere variations of the dual power that existed in Petrograd in the form of a Provisional Government-like body and a soviet-like body competed for power; with the formation of revolutionary committees, all the revolutionary parties experienced splits, including the Bolsheviks, with some Bolsheviks loyal to local constituencies and others to Petrograd/Moscow;

the critical role of foreign powers in supporting the Provisional Government-equivalents in various areas; the initially distracting role of the Great War (Germans in Ukraine; Britain and Germany in Transcaucasia; U.S., Japan, France and Britain in Siberia); the critical behavior of peasants and soldiers; the breakdown of central control over the countryside; the constant transfer of power; the problem of building or restructuring institutions under fire, with often unreliable or disloyal cadres; partisan warfare, warlordism and the problems of controlling military forces; everywhere the paramount problems of military power, food supply and local institution-building.

Brief Survey of Historiographical Discussion

Let us return to Ukraine in particular. Generally, the historiography that addresses the first attempt at Ukrainian statehood grew out of the mutual political recriminations among the "losers" in that struggle, waged largely among the Ukrainian emigres. In this respect, the domination of the emigre polemic in the historical explanations has not distinguished Ukrainian history from the histories of other failed states or the Whites and even shares much in common with the much more extensive literature on the "victory" of the Bolsheviks, especially that inspired by the Menshevik, Kadet, SR and White chroniclers of 1917 and the Civil War.

Among the more traditional arguments/explanations by those who write from a position of regret for the failure of Ukrainian independence are the following:

1. A weak social base for Ukrainian nationalism (John Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution*),¹ as some version of the incomplete sociological nation or the reliance of the nationalist appeal to a politically

1 *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920: A Study in Nationalism* (Princeton, 1952); see also Reshetar's, "The Ukrainian Revolution in Retrospect," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 10 (1968): 116-32.

undeveloped peasantry (extreme version in Arthur Adams on peasant jacquerie).²

2. Insufficient commitment to statehood on the part of the revolutionary elites who made up the various center-to-left coalitions that claimed power from 1917 on and who preferred instead populist nationalism or doctrinaire socialism; related to this is the argument of an immature party system and an inexperienced and divided leadership; as a result, critics point to the unwise politics of the Rada and Directory governments in postponing crucial socio-economic decisions.³

3. Much farther down the list of causes is the split personality of the Ukrainian movement, especially the divide between the West Ukrainian leadership and the East Ukrainian Directory, itself a legacy of the distinct political traditions that developed in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.

The type of argument that has dominated the writing about the Revolution and Civil War in the last couple decades has focused on the social character of the conflicts, reflecting the popularity of social-historical explanations generally (here, the writings of Alexander Rabinowitch, Ronald Suny, Sheila Fitzpatrick are characteristic⁴). These approaches have viewed the Revolution and Civil War as a problem of popular mobilization or collective action.

A younger generation of scholars has expressed dissatisfaction on several grounds with this overly social focus and has begun to turn its attention to questions of ideology, state- and institution-building, and the international context of the revolutionary events.⁵ Before turning to questions of institutions, as well as international or extranational factors, let us review the sources of discontent with the social explanation.

Proceeding in reverse order and starting with the last of these three explanations for the failure of Ukrainian independence, namely the split personality of the Ukrainian movement, certainly those nations generally enjoying a longer tradition of political participation (in the Habsburg lands and Fin-

land) fared better than their counterparts in the Russian empire; but this was not as true for the Baltic states or Poland, whose recent experiences of political participation were probably as stunted as those of the Ukrainians. Other movements for national independence, including the Poles (Pilsudski versus Dmowski), were also torn between sharply divergent visions of the nation-state and its international orientation. The differences between the Western and Eastern Ukrainians were, arguably, not as serious as those between Croats, Serbs, and Bosnians in the creation of Yugoslavia, or between Czechs and Slovaks in the creation of Czechoslovakia.

The procrastination of the Ukrainian governments, the second explanation for the failure of statehood, is an extension of the hypothesis of the political elites' immaturity and inexperience. This was the logic behind the collapse of the Provisional Government collapse in 1917, as well as those of the White governments and the Menshevik government in Georgia, but much the same could be said of the eventually winning Bolsheviks, although, it is true, the Bolshevik leaders were far more willing than their opposition to take unpopular measures and risk civil war.

All the parties that formed during and after the 1905 Revolution were inexperienced and immature. Leopold Haimson has written of a continuous crisis of the political parties that reflected the very protean class and social identities of the Russian empire,⁶ which can be extended if we add the problems of national identity in a multiethnic empire undergoing a transition from dynastic loyalties to more "modern" notions of nationhood. In other words, none of the major or minor parties boasted stable social bases or loyal constituencies; and each major crisis of the revolutionary period split the parties in new ways. The Ukrainian parties certainly reflected this general tendency.

The argument of weak social base, therefore, is part of a general problem for political movements and parties in the early twentieth century. The Russian empire experienced the onset of mass politics and nationalism and socialism all at once and in

2 *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine: The Second Campaign, 1918-1919* (New Haven, 1963).

3 See Ivan L. Rudnytsky's criticism of Vynnychenko as utopian and naive in "Volodymyr Vynnychenko's Ideas in the Light of His Political Writings," *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, ed. Peter L. Rudnytsky [Edmonton, 1987], pp. 417-36; Rudnytsky's position is informed by Viacheslav Lypynsky's writings in favor of a Ukrainian monarchism, *Lysty do brat'iv-khliborobiv* (Vienna, 1926).

4 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (New York, 1976); Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 31-52; Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1932* (Oxford, 1982).

5 A good example of this trend is Lars T. Lih's *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, 1990).

6 Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917," *Slavic Review* 23 (1964): 619-42; and 24 (1965): 1-22; "The Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth-Century Russia," *Slavic Review* 47 (1988): 1-20.

conditions of only a quasi-semi-demi-constitutional monarchy.

Finally, on the matter of social base, I would propose that the old explanation of the Ukrainian national revolution starting in Petrograd in 1917 (the view of the authoritative volume edited by Taras Hunczak⁷) also has begun to erode in the light of more recent research. The extensive activity of the cooperatives, *prosvita* (enlightenment) societies, the agitation of Ukrainian parties (here see the research of Stephen Guthrie⁸), including in the tsarist army, and the internationalization of the Russian empire's nationalities problems under the pressure of the Great War,⁹ have persuaded me that the wildfire-like spread of the Ukrainian movement in 1917 did not start *ab nihilo*, but, like the revolutionary movement generally in the empire, had deeper roots and certainly can be traced to the war years at the very latest.¹⁰ Ironically, despite the popularity of social-history approaches, or perhaps because of them, we in fact know very little about the social history of the Ukrainian chapters of revolution and civil war. Most traditional Russianists have ignored or dismissed the national and ethnic aspects of the revolution in favor of empire-wide generalizations about class, while historians of the Ukrainian events, despite their various claims about the social support of key constituencies, such as the peasants or soldiers, until recently have not been able to conduct the kind of social-historical research needed to bolster those claims.

A Challenge to the Social-History Paradigm

Partly in response to the problems left unanswered by the social explanation and because many of the constraining conditions for Ukraine held, in varying degrees, for several incipient and successful states, two recent challenges to the older literature have emerged, both of them informed by sophisticated comparative perspectives. Alexander

Motyl regards "external" factors to be more decisive in deciding national fates,¹¹ while Geoff Eley, a historian of Germany and Central Europe, emphasizes that the overlap of international and civil conflict is characteristic of the period 1917-1923 in East and Central Europe.¹²

First to Motyl: "Irrespective of their own resources, those countries that remained longest outside the Russian-Soviet orbit largely escaped the Civil War, and enjoyed substantial external assistance attained and maintained independence... Those countries that briefly escaped Russian and/or Soviet control and received little or no external support were forced to rely on their own undeveloped resources and succeeded in attaining independence only temporarily. Inevitably, they were too weak to resist the Bolshevik invasion."¹³

Motyl distinguishes external factors (location of the world war; location of the civil war; extent of external prodding or support) and internal factors (regional autonomy and concrete resources: buildings, bureaucrats, armies, aristocracies, elites, institutions and symbols, national consciousness and nationalist beliefs). He identifies four main players: Red state, White incipient state, non-Russian incipient states, foreign states. The manner and timing of the conflict between the two Russian entities and between them and outside forces set the parameters for peripheral maneuverability and largely determined how the non-Russian incipient states would fare. (Of course, the Red state was also incipient and needs to be considered as such.)

Geoff Eley adds to this: "We might say that for Eastern Europe it is precisely in the question of national self-determination that the territorial-political and revolutionary dimensions of the postwar settlement dramatically intersect. Moreover, their complex interaction extends from the very local (e.g., the fluctuating allegiances of Ukrainian peasants) to the most global levels of the political process between 1917 and 1923 (e.g., the rival internationalist projects of "reactionaries," "reconstructionists" and "revolutionaries," as Arno

7 *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1977).

8 "The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917," *Slavic Review* 38 (1979): 30-47.

9 See Oleh Gerus, "The Ukrainian Question in the Russian Duma, 1906-1917," *Studia Ucrainica* 2 (1984): 157-74; for surveys of wartime dilemmas in the Empire at large, see Robert W. Coonrod, "The Duma's Attitude toward War-Time Problems of Minority Groups," *ASEER* 13 (1954): 29-46; Andreas Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich* (Köln, 1992), chapter 9, sections 3-4; Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), pp. 139-78.

10 Several years ago, Roman Szporluk expressed similar doubts about the general orientation of the Hunczak volume in a review, in *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the United States* 14 (1978-80), esp. pp. 268, 270.

11 See his *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York, 1990), especially chapter 7.

12 "Remapping the Nation: War, Revolutionary Upheaval and State Formation in Eastern Europe, 1914-1923," in Potichnyj and Aster, eds., *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*.

13 Motyl, *Sovietology*, p. 116.

Mayer calls them). To gain an adequate purchase on both the perceptions of political actors and the conditions—pressures that structured, directed and constrained their actions, a sophisticated analysis of the postwar settlement must move back and forth *between* these different levels (locality/region/nation/state/state-system).” Eley goes on to remind us that “this should not be taken as an argument against the social history of the revolution in the western borderlands or against explanations that stress the social determinants of the revolution’s outcome. But after the heady liberalizing release of 1917, the Ukrainian national movement found itself increasingly squeezed between the superior military and organizational resources of rival international designs—the counter-revolutionary and self-interested ambitions of the great powers (first the Germans, then the British and French) and revolutionary ambitions of the Bolsheviks—neither of which proved particularly sensitive to the complexities of regional, let alone local situations.” In the final analysis, Eley assigns considerable explanatory priority to the German occupation regime and its catastrophic consequences, namely the smashing of “whatever was left of the old fabric of social cohesion in the Baltic, Belorussia and Ukraine.”¹⁴

Ukrainian State-building in Comparative Context

I would agree with Motyl and Eley on the privileging of international factors and on the overlapping of international and civil factors. At a minimum, statehood and state-building more readily prosper in a stable environment and in conditions of relative national sovereignty. Instead, Ukraine and many other incipient states set out on the quest for self-determination in conditions of world war and civil war. Their efforts hinged on the internationalization of their cause and foreign protection (see the “successful” state projects of Poland, Finland, the Baltic states, and Czechoslovakia). The two major relevant powers,

Russia and Germany, refused to recognize Ukrainian aspirations. The other possibly relevant power, the United States, in the person of President Wilson, failed to be persuaded of the wisdom of Ukrainian independence or statehood and refused to expend the Wilsonian agenda of national self-determination to Ukraine.¹⁵

I propose nevertheless to go one step further and return to the question of state-building, but I shall flip the question of Ukrainian failure on its head by asking the question why the Bolsheviks succeeded to inquire whether any lessons can be learned from the literature on that matter. After all, the Bolsheviks faced many of the same constraining and hostile factors in their quest for power that their ultimately unsuccessful rivals did. How did they overcome them?

In a recent study of the Russian Civil War, Evan Mawdsley summarizes the factors contributing to Bolshevik victory, including the Bolsheviks’ good fortune to occupy the working-class stronghold of the Central Industrial Region, the Russian heartland and communication nexus of the former empire.¹⁶ In contrast, the Whites were based in the borderlands and on the peripheries, where they antagonized non-Russian populations with their nationalist politics and were forced to rely on foreign suppliers for their arms. Foreign governments’ meager and hesitant support for the Whites was actually more helpful to the Bolsheviks, who were able to portray the Soviet side as leaders of a national liberation struggle against foreign imperialists, than it was to the Whites, who failed to secure any lasting military advantage from this support.

A more intangible difference between the Bolsheviks and their enemies, including both the White movements and the incipient non-Russian states on the periphery, has to do with their contrasting approaches to state-building. The Bolsheviks much more quickly found their mission in state-building, adapting the *gosudarstvennost’* (state-mindedness) project of their liberal and conservative opponents to their unambiguous slogan of proletarian dictatorship.¹⁷ Their Ukrainian opponents, and this was

14 On the Germans, see O. Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1971); B. Dmytryshyn, “German Occupation of the Ukraine 1918: Some New Evidence,” *Slavic and East European Studies* 10 (1965-66): 79-92; X. Eudin, “The German Occupation of the Ukraine in 1918,” *Russian Review* 1 (1941): 90-103; H. Meyer, “The Germans in the Ukraine 1918,” *Slavic Review* 9 (1949-50): 105-15.

15 Constantine Warvariv, “American and the Ukrainian National Cause, 1917-1920,” in Taras Hunczak, ed., *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution*, pp. 352-81; O. Shulhyn, “The Doctrine of Wilson and the Building of the Ukrainian National Republic,” *Ukrainian Quarterly* 12 (1956): 326-31; see also L. Sonevysky, “The Ukrainian Question in R. H. Lord’s Writings on the Paris Peace Conference,” *Annals* 10 (1962-63): 68-84; D. Saunders, “Britain and the Ukrainian Question, 1912-1920,” *The English Historical Review* 103 (1988): 40-68.

16 *The Russian Civil War* (Boston, 1987).

17 See Neil Harding “Socialism, Society, and the Organic Labour State,” in *The State in Socialist Society* (State University of New York Press, 1984);

true for many of the incipient states, for very good reasons advocated independence only with great qualifications and to the bitter end placed their hopes in a more moderate program of greater national autonomy within a democratic, federalist Russia. Despite the brief era of institution-building under Hetman Skoropadskii, Ukrainian elites paid little attention to state-formation and relied on former imperial officials and institutions in the expectation that moderate, reformist and federalist parties would come to power in Russia. Neither the Bolsheviks nor the Whites had such scruples and dealt highhandedly with the Ukrainian governments.¹⁸

These differences can be illustrated in the realm of civil-military relations, certainly a crucial sphere for the survival of any belligerent incipient state. The moderate socialists and democrats who came to power in Kiev were hesitated to build a powerful army and held longer to their anti-militarist values than their Bolshevik counterparts.¹⁹ The Bolsheviks appeared to understand far better than their opponents the political aspects of civil war and adapted available organizations and techniques to those peculiar circumstances. In the Red Army the new elites achieved a remarkable degree of control over the military professionals through a network of commissars and revolutionary military councils. The commissars and their extensive political staffs, in turn, set up civilian administrations in recaptured territory, often employing former imperial civil servants, but in new institutions, which bore the stamp of revolutionary legitimacy. Indeed, these innovations proved so successful that White generals and Ukrainian military leaders belatedly tried to imitate them.

Both Whites and Ukrainian elites failed to achieve the kind of control over military forces that the Bolsheviks devised. Civilian politicians on the White side shaped the relations of the movement with other challenger movements on the peripheries, in fact blocking—in the name of one, indivisible Russia—any possible alliance with, say, the Ukrain-

ian governments. At the same time, the civilians had virtually no influence over the military's activities as such; the White military campaign deteriorated into warlordism, accompanied by arbitrary terror, looting, and brigandage.²⁰ Petliura faced similar problems of local control in Ukraine, but enjoyed even one less advantage than the Whites in that he had virtually no officers from the imperial army around which to build a command structure. Of course, the Bolsheviks also employed coercion, shamelessly so under the slogan of Red Terror, but their coercive organs, however merciless, at least acted in more predictable, relatively less random ways. In civil war such relative advantages were decisive. The Bolsheviks also learned earlier than their opponents the value of wartime propaganda, this too reflecting their understanding of the peculiar nature of modern civil war.

By way of preliminary conclusion, I would propose that new research on this period in Ukrainian history thoroughly integrate the social history that will be constructed from the recently opened archives with considerations of international politics and war, keeping in mind the real political space available to the Ukrainian elites in this period; and finally, that scholars keep a comparative perspective in the forefront, to highlight the commonalities of all the incipient states (including the Bolsheviks') so as to identify more clearly the peculiarities of the Ukrainian case. Such research promises not only to enrich our understanding of the general revolutionary processes that wracked the Russian Empire, but also to shed new light on the interaction of class and ethnicity, international and transnational processes, and both Russian and Ukrainian history in particular.

Mark von Hagen is Associate Professor in the Department of History, Columbia University. His publications include *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship. The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930* (Cornell University Press, 1990).

Lars Lih, *Bread and Authority*.

18 See Anna Procyk, "Nationality Policy of the White Movement: Relations between the Volunteer Army and the Ukraine," (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Columbia University, 1973).

19 Here I come closer to the Lypynsky analysis/critique of Ukrainian politics.

20 I summarize these arguments in my *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930* (Ithaca, 1990), pp. 124-26.

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